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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHEFHL/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T GUATEMALA 000756

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/07/2019
TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: WHILE STEALING COCAINE, POLICE CONFRONTED BY AG'S
OFFICE AND ARMY

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Drew Blakeney for reasons 1.4 (b&d).

¶1. (U) This is a spot report based on late-breaking, initial information that is subject to confirmation.

¶2. (U) Guatemalan press reported that on August 6 authorities captured 830 (according to DEA sources, 800-830) kilos of cocaine hidden in a semi-trailer truck in a northern part of Guatemala City. PNC (National Civilian Police) officers stopped the truck at a roadblock at approximately 0730 hours. Investigators from the Attorney General's Office (Public Ministry) who should have been alerted right away did not learn of the incident until late afternoon. AG's Office investigators then arrived on the scene supported by army units. (Minister of Defense Abraham Valenzuela later arrived on the scene, and National PNC Commissioner Porfirio Perez Paniagua was also present.) The police initially denied the investigators access to the truck. Suspecting the police might have stolen some of the captured cocaine, investigators, supported by soldiers, searched the police vehicles and reportedly arrested one officer.

¶3. (S) The Attorney General's Office became aware of Precinct 12 police's intention to steal a load of cocaine through telephone conversations intercepted by the AG's Special Methods Unit (the USG-supported wire tapping unit), which was targeting police telephones. Intercepted conversations implicate PNC Commissioner Perez Paniagua, many senior Guatemala City police officers, and also cast doubt on the role played SAIA Director Baltazar, who at a minimum appears to have acquiesced to the robbery. In all, between 30 and 90 police officers are implicated.

¶4. (S) Suspecting police wrongdoing, the AG's Office informed the DEA-supported Sensitive Investigations Unit (SIU), which sent officers from another elite unit to investigate. Precinct 12 officers briefly detained the investigating police officer. Via the Minister of Government, the Attorney General requested army support for his investigators and prosecutors heading to the scene. DAO sources confirmed that 80-100 soldiers from the Mariscal Zavala and Special Forces brigades responded to the request, and arrived on the scene with armored combat vehicles. The police, apparently including the National PNC Commissioner, retreated with the seized truck behind a fence, and denied the investigators and army access to the truck. Eventually, however, the police stood down. Investigators found between 800 to 830 kilos of cocaine. According to DEA sources, there was another 280 kilos in the truck which Precinct 12 police had already removed in the morning (the total amount of cocaine originally on the truck is believed to have been approximately 1100 kilos). Embassy does not know to which

organization the cocaine belonged.

15. (S) Comment: This operation constitutes a substantial success for the USG-supported wire tap unit at the AG's Office. The army's quick support to civilian authorities reflects well on that institution. The consequences for the senior leadership of the police are not yet clear, but we anticipate they will be major.
McFarland